The semantics and pragmatics of evidentiality

Vesela Simeonova

Abstract

Arguably, in any language one can convey not only information, but also how they acquired that information: through direct observation, hearsay, inference, etc. For example, in English, one can say:

(1)   **Reportedly**, it's raining.

About a quarter of the world's languages organize sources of information into grammatical paradigms, i.e. closed systems with a limited number of members. We call these **grammatical evidential markers.** For example, Cuzco Quechua has a paradigm of three evidential markers (example from Faller 2002):

(2)   Parashan-**si/mi/cha**.
       rain.PROG-REP/DIR/INF
       'It's raining + source of information: *report/direct observation/inference.*'

This course will survey the semantics and pragmatics of grammatical evidential markers from a cross-linguistic perspective. We will review the main theories of the core meaning of evidentiality in prototypical simple declarative sentences such as (2). In addition, we will go beyond those and explore the properties of evidentials in more complex environments, such as questions, imperatives, conditionals, embedded clauses, the relationship between evidentials and epistemic modals, and non-canonical uses of evidential markers in mirative and impolite utterances.